

Apollo's Dictation: *Odes* 4.15 and the Augustan *Recusatio*
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Innovation and invention were key objectives for the poets of both the Alexandrian and Augustan eras. Through their reworking of previous models, these poets first claim legitimacy by embracing a long established tradition, and second, through their reworking of generic expectations, make a space for themselves within a new tradition anchored to, but not encompassed by, the intertext of the previous tradition. The aesthetic stance asserted by Horace as a poetic ideal for the Augustan era - preference for the refined, rather than the verbose, the erudite, rather than the mundane, the innovated, rather than the reproduced – a manifesto congruent with the stylistic principles set forth in the *Aetia* prologue of Callimachus, is not mere recapitulation of the same Alexandrian poetics; rather, one recognizes the outlines of the tropes previously seen, and perhaps even glimpses of clarity at some points, but the overall image is not the same. Like the Alexandrians, the primary focus of the Roman authors remained always on their own time and the adaptation of their models to fit that context. Thus, the textual production of Horace, Virgil, or Propertius will inherently differ from their models, because the intention is adaptation, not imitation.

This pointed innovation is easily observable in the execution of the *recusatio* trope across the works of the Augustan poets, particularly those of Horace. The function of the *recusatio* has been subjected to two distinct treatments in classical scholarship: one theory is that it represents a rejection of epic poetry, as in Callimachus who praises refined poetry in place of the long, drawn-out epic; the other more recent scholarly consensus is that it does not necessarily represent a rejection of epic, but rather it acts as an apology by an author for not writing in the higher style of epic. A distinction needs to be established that has not been previously noted: not all *recusationes* are equivalent. I argue that there were two essential articulations of the *recusatio* within Augustan literature and that a unified analysis of this trope is not appropriate to the function of these *recusationes* within their diverse literary contexts. The first form responds to a purported request for encomiastic epic, while the second does not consider patronage within its internal discourse. Both types have been grouped together within scholarly analysis, resulting in a catch-all grouping that assumes that every discussion of the choice to veer from the epic genre must be a rejection of a patron's request for epic.

An examination of the *recusatio* in Horace's *Odes* 4.15—in the context of his Augustan contemporaries, and – where appropriate –his Alexandrian precursor, Callimachus—will show the above to be an oversimplification of the function of the *recusatio* in Augustan poetry. In the instance of *Odes* 4.15, the *recusatio* is further complicated by the figure of Apollo and his dictation; the issues of poetics and patronage appear to merge in this single figure, as the god Apollo, who may represent Augustus himself, dictates poetic principles to Horace. Taking into consideration how Horace deals with this complication, this paper will elucidate the problem of describing all *recusationes* as statements opposing a patron's request, since Horace's use of the *recusatio* in this context emphasizes poetics, not patronage, despite the potential identification of Augustus with the god Apollo.